Bennn's View of Christianity

THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE ANTIQUE WORLD Marc Aurèle et La Fin du Monde Antique is the descriptive title of the volume in which M. Rankst Ranan concludes his attempt to trace the incubation of Christianity. We have reached the daylight of history; the period of obscurity and legend, or what the author calls the embryogeny of the Christian Church, ends with the death of Marcus Aurellus and the failure of the Stole philosophy to reform the Greec-Roman world. At this date the child has all its organs; it is savered from its mother: it will live benceforward with a life of its own. For the study of an institution organically complete, such as was the Christian Church in the third century, and, a fortiori, in the centuries that followed, M. Renan thinks that the powers of judgment and the stores of erudition possess by coclesiastical historians suffice. But, as he repeatedly insisted in the course of this work, ecclesiastical history, in the proper meaning of the phrase, is something essentially distinct from the story of the Christian beginnings -that is to say, from the analysis of the suc cessive metamorphoses which the germ planted by Jesus in the heart of humanity underwent before becoming a fully equipped, enduring Church. Methods altogether different are required for treating the divers stages in the growth of a great religious or political creation. An investigation of its origin and embryonic stage presupposes a philosophical spirit, a keen intuition of what is certain, or only probable, or merely plausible, a profound comorehansion of human life and its protean manistations, a special aptitude for drawing from the few texts that we possess all they can dis-close concerning psychological situations from which we are far removed. The comprehension of those obscure mental states, which antedate clear reflection, of the very states, in other words, wherein man's conscience shows itself most fruitful and creative, is the intellectual conquest of the nineteenth century. It has been the aim of M. Renan to turn this con quest to account in the composition of the work whose concluding volume is before us. of Marcus Aurelius and the Stoic philosophy, but the discussion of these themes, which is to some extent an episode, is already, no doubt,

A large part of this book is devoted to a study familiar to many American readers, seeing that the chapters containing it have been translated and published in a well-known London re-We shall limit ourselves, therefore, to some extracts from the untranslated portions of this volume, which portray the revolution wrought in the Roman world by the new faith. which touch on some of the ulterior transformations which Christianity has experienced and which finally define, concisely but distinctly, the author's attitude toward the Christian

z. Just in proportion as the Empire drooped Christianity raised its head. During the third century Christianity sucks like a vampire the life-blood of the old society, undermines all its forces, and brings about a general enervation, against which the patriotic Emperors strive in vain. It is needless for Christianits o resort to open violent attacks; it has only to shut itself up within its churches. It avenges tself by refusing to serve the State, for it almost monopolizes the principles without which no State can prosper. Christians then had recourse to that sweeping kind of warfare which, in France, and in our own day, is waged by conservatives against the State. To the army to the magistracy, and every branch of the pubilc service, a certain amount of seriousness and honosty is indispensable. When the classes

that furnish this seriousness and honesty hold

themselves aloof from every civil function the

whole commonwealth must suffer.

The Church, in the third century, by absorbing the vitality, exhausts civil society, bleeds it, and leaves it drained. Its little associations kill the great body corporate. The antique life, a life that was wholly outward and virile. a life of glory, heroism, and secularism, a life of the forum, the theatre and the gymnasium is conquered by the Jewish life; a life opposed to militarism, loving the shade better than the laylight, a life of pale and cloistered folk Politics imply a race of men not too much de tached from earth. When man makes up his mind to aspire for nothing but heaven, he has no longer a fatherland here below. You cannot make a nation out of monks and asceties; disdain and hatred of the world do not fit us for life's battle. India, which, of all known countries, has plunged the deepest into asceticism, has, from time immemorial, been the prey of every conqueror. So it was, in some respects, with Egypt. It is the inevitable effect of ascetleism to make us look on everything that is not re igious as inferior and frivolous, Compared with the priest, the sovereign and the warrior are but clownish, brutal beings; civil order is regarded as an irksome tyranny. Christianity mproved the morals of the Old World, but from the military and patriotic point of view, de-stroyed it. The city and the State will only come to terms at a later date with Christlanity. by compelling the latter to undergo the mos-

profound modifications. 'They dwell upon the earth," says the autho of the Epistle to Diognetes; "but in reality their native country is in heaven." As a matter of fact, when a martyr was asked to what country he belonged, "I am a Christian" was the answer. The fatherland and civil laws, these are the father and mother, on whom, according to Clement of Alexandria, the true Gnostic should turn his back, if he would sit at the right hand of God. When the world's business is in question the Christian is embar rassed, inefficient; the Gospel makes devotees not citizens. So it was with Islamism and Buddhism. The advent of these great universal religions extinguished the old conception of patriotism; men were no longer Romans. Athenians; they became Christians, Mussulmans, Buddhists. Henceforth men will be classified assorting to their croed, not according to their native countries; their divisions will be based on heresies, not nationalities.

That is what Marous Aurelius saw perfectly, and what made him so ill-disposed toward thristianity. To him the Church appeared a state within the State. "The camp of piety," that new "scheme of a fatherland founded on the divine Word" has nothing in common with the Roman camp, which is far from pretending to train candidates for heaven. The Church in fact, avows itself a completely equipped community, far superior to the civil society the pastor outweighs the magistrate. The Church is the Christian's fatherland, as the synagogue is the Jew's: the Christian and the Jew abide as strangers in the countries where they happen to Hardly even has the Christian sojourn. a father and a mother. He owes nothing to the Empire, while the Empire owes everything to him; for it is the presence of the faithful, senttored through the Roman world, that stays the wrath of heaven and saves the State from destruction. The Christian feels no joy at the Empire's victories. To him the public disasters seem a confirmation of the prophecies that condemn the world to perish at the hands of harbarians and by the flames. The cosmopo-litism of the Stoics had indeed its dangers, too but a fervent love of civilization and of Greek culture served to counterpoise the excess of their freedom from race prejudice.

From many points of view, assuredly, the Christians were loyal subjects. They never revolted; they were accustomed to pray for their very persecutors. In spite of their grievances against Marcus Aurelius, they took no part in the revolt of Avidius Cassius. They professed principles of the most absolute legitimism. God giving earthly power to whom it pleaseth Him, men must obey, without examination him who officially possesses it. But this seem ing political orthodoxy was, at bottom, only the worship of success. "There was never found among us a partisan of Albigus, or a partisan Niger," says Tertuilian estentationaly, in

Septimius Severus, a more legitimate ruler than Albinus, or than Pescennius Niger? He succeeded better than they did, that is all. The Christian principle, "We should acknowledge him who wields the power," necessarily contributes to establish the worship of accomplished facts, that is to say, the worship of force. Political liberatism owes nothing, and will never owe anything to Christianity. The conception of representative government is the antithesis of the idea explicitly put forth by Jesus, by

Saint Paul, Saint Peter and Clement Romanus. The most important of civic duties, military service, Christians were unable to fulfil. That service implied, besides the necessity of shedding blood, which seemed criminal to men of an exalted spiritual mood, nots that timid conscience would regard as idolatrous. No doubt there were a few Christian soldiers in the second century, but very soon the incom-patibility of the two professions became patent and the soldier quitted the ranks or became martyr. The antipathy was uncompromising: no sooner did one become a Christian, than he deserted the army. "You cannot serve two masters," was the principle incessantly recalled. Even the representation of a sword or bow upon a ring was prohibited to Christians. "You lo enough fighting for the Emperor when you pray for him." The great weakening observed in the Roman army at the close of the second century, and which betrays itself most markodly in the third century, has its source in Christianity. Here Celsus laid his finger on the truth with marvellous sagacity. A soldier's courage, which alone, to the German's eye, unocks Walhalla, is not of itself a virtue in the primitive Christian's eyes. If it be displayed for a right cause, well and good; otherwise it is but envagery. Assuredly a man of great bravery in war may be a man of mediocre morality; but a common wealth of saints would be so feeble! By being too consistent, the Christian East has lost all military officiency Islam has turned the weakness to account, and has given the world the sorry spectacle of that eternal Eastern Christian, the same everywhere, in spite of all differences of races, al-ways flogged, always massacred, incapable of looking a fighting man in the face, perpetually submitting his neck to the sword; a victim that inspires little interest, for he feels no impulse to revolt, and is impotent to hold a weapon, even when you put one in his hand.

The Christian shunned also all judicial offices, public functions, civil honors. To seek such honors, to covet or even accept such functions, was to express faith in a world which his principles compolled him to look upon as foomed and utterly defiled with idolatry. A law of Septimius Severus permits "adepts of the Jewish superstition" to attain to civic honors, and relieves them from obligations irreconcilable with their faith. Unquestionably Christians might have profited by these exemptions; but they did not do so. To hang a garland over the door by way of an-nouncing days of festival, to take part in entertainments and public rejoicings was apostasy. The same interdiction debarred them from the civil tribunals. It was a Christian's duty to abstain from law suits, and confine himself to the arbitration of his pastors The impossibility of mixed marriages helped to raise an insurmountable wall between the Church and heathen society. The faithful were forbidden to walk about the streets; they were only to meet in private. They were not even permitted to use the same taverns as the pagans; on their travels the Christians would etake themselves to a church, and would there participate in the love-feasts and in the distribution of the remnants of the bread and wine offered in communion.

A multitude of arts and trades, whose practice involved relations with idelatry, were forbidden to the Christians. For them sculpture and painting almost ceased to have any purpose these fine arts, in particular, were regarded as enemies. Therein lies the explanation of one of the most singular facts of history. I mean the disappearance of sculpture in the first half of the third century. The first thing in the old civilization to be killed by Christianity was art. Wealth it killed more slowly; but in this direction, also, its action was no less decisive. Christianity was, above all things, an immense economical revolution. The first became the last and the last became the first. It was, in very truth, the realization of the kingdom of God as the Jews conceived it. One day Rabbi Joseph, son of Rabbi Joshua ben Levi, having fallen into a trance, his father asked him, when he had recovered, "What saw'st thou in heaven?" "I saw," was Joseph's answer, "the world turned upside down; the mightiest were in the lowest place, the humblest in the high-'It was the normal state of things that est." thou didst behold, my son."

The Roman Empire, by lowering the nobility and by almost annihilating the privileges of tages of property. Far from establishing a real equality between citizens, the Roman Empire while it flung wide open the gates of the old Roman city, created a profound distinction, that, namely, between the honestiores (the rich or notable) and the lumiliores, or tenuiores (the poor). While proclaiming the political equality of all, the Romans introduced inequality before the law, and especially before the penal code Poverty rendered the title of Roman citizen almost illusory, and the great majority were poor. The blunder of Greece, which had consisted in despising the artisan and agricultural laborer, had not been outgrown. Christianity itself, at first, did nothing for the farm hand; it even worked injury to the rural population through the institution of the Episcops office, by whose influence and benefits only the towns could profit: but it had a most important bearing on the rehabilitation of the handi craftsman. One of the recommendations giver by the Church to the artisan, is to apply himself to his craft with taste and zeal. The word perarius gains dignity; in their epitaphs the Christian workman and workwoman are praised for having been hard workers.

The workingman, earning honestly his lively ood from day to day, such was indeed the Christian ideal. In the eyes of the primitive Church, avarice was the supreme crime. In most cases what they stigmatized as avarice, w should call simple economy. Almsgiving was viewed as a strict duty. Judalsm had alread; nade it a precept. In the psalms and prophetic books, the ebion, or needy man, is the triend of God, and giving to the ebion is giving to God. In Hebrew, almsgiving is a synonyme of jus-tice. It was found necessary to restrain the eagerness of plous folk to justify themselves in his way; a Talmudio precept prohibits the Hebrew from giving away in charity more than a fifth of his property. Christianity, which, at its beginning, was a community of Ebionites embraced fully the idea that the rich man, if he does not give away his superfluity, is a detainer of stolen goods. God gives to all men indis tinguishably all that he has created. "Imitate God's impartiality and nobody will be poor."
we read in a text that was for a time looked upon as sacred. The Church itself an immense charitable institution. The low feasts, and the distributions made of what was left from the offerings fed the poor and the

It was the rich man who, along the whole line, was sacrificed. Few rich men entered the Church, and their position in it was extremely difficult. The poor, proud of the Gospel proises, treated them in a way that might seem arrogant. The rich man had to persuade men to forgive him his riches, as if they were something derogatory to the spirit of Christianity. As a matter of right the Kingdom of God was barred against him, unless he purified his wealth by almagiving, or explated it by mar-tyrdom. He was regarded as an egoist who grew fat upon the aweat of others. The com-munity of goods, indeed, if it had ever existed. existed no longer. What was called the aposto cal mode of life, that is to say, the ideal of the primitive Church at Jerusalem, was a dream lost in a far distant past; but the kind of indi vidual ownership exercised by one of the faith ful was but a semi-ownership; to him it was of small account, and the Church, in reality, had

It is in the fourth century that the struggle reign of Septimius Severus. But, becomes far reaching and desperate. The a matter of truth, wherein was rich classes, addicted almost without excep-

tion to the old worship, fight vigorously; but or men win the day. In the East, where the action of Christianity was far more complate, or, we should rather say, less interfered with, than in the West, there were hardly any rich men left after the middle of the fifth century. Syria, and emphatically Egypt, became wholly occlesiastical and monastic countries. The Church and the monastery, that is to say, the two forms of communistic existence, were the sole possessors of capital in those parts. The Arab conquest which ran headlong over these countries, after a few battles on the frontier, found nothing but a herd to drive. Once the liberty of worship was guaranteed to them, the Eastern Christians bowed to every kind of tyranny. In the West, the Germanic invasions, and other causes, hinder pauperism from triumphing thus completely. But human life is sus-pended for a thousand years. Industry on a large scale becomes impossible; by reason of the false notions that were current about usury, every banking and insurance operation is smitten with an interdict. The Jew alone may handle money; the Christians force him to be rich, and then repreach him with the fortune to which he is condemned. Here is the greatest blunder of Christianity. It does much worse than say to the poor: Enrich yourselves at the expense of the rich; it says: Riches are nothing. It cuts off capital by the root; it for-bids the most legitimate of all things, the receiving of interest for money; while it pre-tends to guarantee to the rich man his riches, it strips him of their fruits by rendering then unproductive. The fatal error disseminated over the whole society of the middle ages by the fletitious crime of usury, was the obstacle that blocked, for upward of ten centuries, the progress of civilization.

The sum of labor in the world was considerably lessened. Countries like Syris, where the labor which it costs to amass a competence outweighs the pleasure it brings, and where slavery, accordingly, is a condition of material civilization, sank at least one degree in the human scale. The antique ruins remained there, but only as vestiges of a banished and uncomprehended world. The joys of the life to come, which were not to be acquired by labor, were so much subtracted from the motives which impelled man to action. The bird of the air, the lily, they toil not, neither do they spin, and yet they hold, by right of beauty, one of the highest ranks in the hierarchy of created things. Great is the poor man's joy when men come and foretell in such fleures a hanniness unbought with toll. The beggar, to whom you announce that the world will soon be his and that, though he spends his life in doing naught, yet within the Churchhe is a magnate, so much so that his prayers are of all the most efficacious, that beggar straightway becomes dangerous. This was made plain in the late Messianic movement in Tuscany. The peas-ants, schooled by lazzaretti, lost the habit of labor, and were unwilling to again resume their wonted toil. As in Galilee, and as in the Umbria of the time of Francis D'Assisi, the humble folk imagined that they would win heaven by poverty. After such dreams men do not resign themselves to resume the roke; they will make themselves apostles rather than take on the chain they had thought shivered. It is so hard to bend the back all day in degrading and ungrateful labor.

The aim of Christianity was in no sense the improvement of human society nor the augmentation of the sum of happiness posse by individuals. Man tries to pass his days upon the earth as comfortably as possible, where he takes the earth seriously and the few days he has to spend there. But when he is told that the earth is on the point of coming to an end, that life is but the trial of a day, the insignificant prelude to an ideal eternity, what does it profit him to embellish it? We do not busy ourselves in decorating and rendering convenient the hovel where we tarry but an hour. It is especially in the relation of Christianity to slavery that this effect of it is patent. Christianity eminently helped to console the slave; but it did not directly work for the suppression of slavery. We have seen that the great school of jurisconsults, for the most part adherents of the Stoic philosophy that arose under the Antonines, was wholly pos-sessed with the idea that slavery was an abuse that ought to be gradually suppressed. Christianity never declared in so many words that slavery was an abuse; nevertheless, by its exalted idealism, it powerfully furthered the philosophical tendency which made itself felt in laws and manners.

Primitive Christianity was an essentially religious movement. Everything in the social organization of the time that was not bound up with idolatry, seemed to it worth preserving. The idea never occurred to the Christian doc-tors of protesting against the established fact of slavery; that would have been a revolution ary mode of action, altogether contrary to their spirit. The rights of man are, in no sense, a Christian affirmation. Saint Paul acknowledges unqualifiedly the legitimacy of a master's title; there is not a word in all the old Christian literature to incite a slave to revolt, or to urge emancipation on a master, or even to agitate the legal problem to which slavers has given birth among us. It is only danger ous sectaries, like the Carpocratians, who talk about suppressing the differences between man and man; the orthodox accept the principle of absolute ownership, whether it have for its object a man or a thing. The frightful lot of a slave was far from touching them as much as it does us. For the few hours that life lasts, what mattereth a man's condition 'Hast thou been called a slave, regard it not canst thou free thyself? profit by the chance The slave is the master's freedman; the free man is the slave of Christ, In Christ there i no longer either Greek or Jew, slave or free man, man or woman." The words servus, and libertus, are extremely rare on Christian tembs The slave and the freeman are alike servus Dei, as the soldier is miles Christi. The slave, on the other hand, loudly vaunts himself as one whom Jesus hath made free.

Submissiveness and conscientious attach ment on the part of the slave toward his mas ter, a gentle and fraternal spirit on the master's part toward his slave, such are practically the limits of the ethical teachings of primitive Christianity on this delicate point. The num ber of slaves and freedmen in the Church was very considerable. Never, as we have said, did the Church advise the Christian master who owned Christian slaves to free them. It did ot even prohibit corporal punishment, which is the almost inevitable outcome of slavery Under Constantine the favor with which emancipation had been regarded by the juriscon sults, seemed to retrograde. Had the move ment, which began under the Antonines been continued through the second half of the third century and through the fourth century. the suppression of slavery would have been brought about by law, and through purchase by the Government. The ruin of political lib-eralism, and the misfortunes of the time. caused the loss of all the ground that had been gained. The Fathers of the Church talk about the ignominy of slavery, and the baseness slaves. In the same terms that the pagans use. John Chrysostom, in the fourth century, is al most the only doctor who explicitly recom mends to a master the manumission of his slave as a good action. At a later date the Church owned slaves, and treated then as everybody else did, that is to say, harshly enough. The condition of a harshly enough. slave of the Church was even aggra-vated by one circumstance, to wit, the the Church was even aggraimpossibility of alienating the property of the Ohurch. Who was his owner? Who had legal ompetence to free him? The difficulty o solving this question prolonged ecclesiastical servitude and brought about this curious result, that the Church, which in reality has done so much for the slave, was the last to own slaves The freeing of slaves was generally performed by will. Now, the Church had no wills to make even the ecclesiastical freedman had for his patron a mistress who never died.

It was in an indirect and inferential way that situation of the slave and to hasten the end of slavery. The rôle of Christianity in the matter

of slavery was that of an enlightened conservative, who, by his fundamental principles furthers the cause of radicalism, while at the same time employing quite reactionary language. By showing the slave capable of virtue, heroic in martyrdom, the equal, and, per-haps, the superior of his master from the Doint of view of heaven's kingdom, the new faith made slavery untomable. When you give the slave a moral value, you deal slavery its death blow. The meetings in the church would, of themselves, suffice to ruin this great institution. ruin this cruel institution. Antiquity had only upheld slavery by excluding the slaves from the rites of patriotic worship. Had they offered sacrifices with their masters, they would have been morally rehabilitated. Attendance together at church was the most perfect lesson of religious equality. What shall we say of the Eucharist partaken of in common, of martyrdom borne in company? From the moment that the slave is of the same religion as his master, and prays in the same temple with him, slavery is very near its end. The feelings that Blandina and her "mistress according to the flesh " cherish for one another are those of a mother and a daughter. At church, master and slave used to call one another brethren. Even with regard to the most delicate of questions, that of matrimony, such miracles were seen as freedmen marrying noble ladies (feming clarissing).
As would naturally be supposed, the Chris-

the true faith without at the same time showing an indiscretion in the matter that might have peopled the Church with unworthy members. It was accounted a good action to go to the slave market, and, obeying the guidance of divine grace, to pick out some poor creature there on sale, in order to insure his eternal salvation. "By buying a slave you gain a soul." became a current proverb. A more usual and still more legitimate kind of proselytism consisted in the harboring of foundlings, who thereupon became Christian alumni. Now and then, certain churches would redeem, at their own cost, one of their members from his servile condition. This intensely excited the desires of the luckless ones who were less favored. The orthodox doctors did not encourage these dangerous aspirations. "Let them continue in their service for the glory of God. in order that they may win from God a far better liberty." The slave, or rather the freedman, could rise to the most important occlesiastical functions, provided his master or his patron offered no opposition.

tian master would usually draw his slaves to

What Christianity veritably founded was equality in the sight of God. Clement of Alexandria, and especially John Chrysostom, never miss a chance to console the slave, to proclaim him brother of the freeman, and every whit as noble, provided he willingly and heartily accepts his condition and serves for the love of God. In its liturgy the Church has a prayer for those who travail in the bitterness of alayery." Judaism had already put forth comparatively humane maxims on the same subject. It had opened as widely as possible the door to manumissions. Slavery among the Hebrews was singularly softened. The Essenes and the Therapeutes went further. They declared slavery contrary to the law of nature, and would have naught to do with servile labor. Christianity, less radical, did not suppress slavery, but it suppressed the manners and morals that belong to slavery. Slavery is founded on the absence of the idea of human confraternity; the idea of brotherhood is its destruction. After the fifth century the enfranchising of slaves and the ransoming of captives were of all acts of charity the most fervently commended by the Church.

They who have affected to see in Christianity

the revolutionary doctrine of the rights of man and in Jesus a procursor of Toussaint L'Ouverture, are entirely mistaken. Christianity has inspired no Spartacus; the true Christian does not revolt. But, make we haste to add, it was not Spartacus who put an end to slavery; it was far rather Blandina; above all things it was the ruin of the Graco-Roman world. The antique slavery was never abolished, to say the, truth; it fell into desuetude, or rather. it was transformed. The inertia into which the East sank after the complete triumph of the Church in fifth century, made the slave uscless. In the west, the invasions of the barbarians had an analogous effect. The species of universal listlessness and recklessness which took possession of humanity after the downfall of the Western Roman Empire, brought about innumerable manumissions. The slave was a surviving victim of the pagan civilization, the almost useless remnant of a world of luxury and leisure. Men believed they could redeem their souls from the terrors of the life to come by delivering this suffering brother here below. Slavery became besides mainly rural, and presupposed a bond between the man and the soil, which was to become one day his property. As to the philosophical principle that man should be his own master it was not until very much later that it appeared as a social dogma. Seneca and Ulpian had proclaimed it in a theoretical way: Voltaire Rousseau, and the French Revolution made it the basis of humanity's new creed.

It came to pass that a religion framed for the inward consolation of a very small number of the elect became, by an unheard of stroke of fortune, the religion of millions, composing the most active portion of mankind. It is preëminently in victories of a religious order that it is right to say that the conquered give laws to the conquerors. The multitudes. as they througed into the little churches of the saints, carried with them there their imperfections, and at times their stains. A race when it embraces a worship that was not made for it, transforms it to meet the wants of its imagination and its heart.

According to the primitive Christian conception, a Christian was perfect; the sinner, by the simple fact of becoming a sinner, ceased to be a Christian. When whole cities came to be converted in the mass all this was changed. The precepts of Gospel devotion and abnegation became inapplicable; they were meta morphosed into mere recommendations, meant for those aione who aspired to perfection. And as to this perfection, where could it be made reality? The world, as it is constituted, absolutely excludes perfection; he who should literally carry out the Gos-pel in ordinary life would play the part offa dupe or an idiot. There is left the me tery. Logic resumed its rights. Christian morality-a morality adapted to a little church and to people sequestered from the world, created for itself the medium it needed. The lospel necessarily evolved the convent; a Christianity provided with all its organs can not do without convents-that is to say, places where the Gospel life, elsewhere impossible may be reduced to practice. The convent is the perfect church; the monk is the true Christian. Thus it happens that the most effective work of Christianity has been wrought by the monastic orders. These orders, far from being a leprosy, attacking the work of Jesus from without, were a spontaneous inevitable outgrowth of the work of Jesus. In inconveniences, for over against the monk the Germanic conquest set up a powerful military caste; the East, on the other hand, was truly eaten away by a monasticism which had only the most delusive semblance of Christian per-A dubious morality and a natural leaning to-

ward idelatry, such were the sorry predispo-sitions brought into the Church by the multitudes that were made to enter it, a part of them by force, from the end of the fourth century. Man changes not in a day, baptism has no miraculous, instantaneous effects; these pagan masses, who had sourcely gone through the form of conversion, remained just what they were before; in the East, bad, selfish, corrupt; in the West, gross and superstitious. As regards morals, indeed, the Church needed only were already written in books accepted as canonical. As regards superstition, on the other hand, its task was far more delicate;

changes of religion are, in general, more parent than real. Whatever may be a man's conversions or apostasies he remains faithful to the first worship which he embraced and loved with more or less intensity. A crowd of idolators, at bottom no wise changed, and transmitting the same idolatrous instincts to their children, came into the Church. A full tide of superstition began to pour into the religious community, that hitherto had been most

If we except a few Oriental sects, the primitive Christians are the least superstitious of mankind. The Christian and the Jew might be fanatics; they were not superstitious in the sense in which the term was applied to a Gaul or a Paphiagonian. Among them were to be seen no amulets, no holy images, no object of worship outside of the conceptions of divinity. Converted pagans could not content themselves with such simplicity. The worship of martyrs was the first concession wrung by human weakness from the indulgence of a clergy that sought to be everything to all men, in order to win all to Jesus. The bodies of the saints were invested with wonder-working virtues; they became talismans; the places where they reposed were marked with a more special holiness than other sanctuaries consecrated to God. The lack of any notion of the laws of nature quickly opened the door to a frenzied thaumaturgy. The Celtic and Italiot peoples that form the basis of the population in the West are of all races the most super stitious. A multitude of beliefs that primitive Christianity would have deemed sacri-legious crept in this way into the Church. The latter did what it could; its efforts to improve and elevate gross-minded disciples form one of the finest pages in man's history; for five or six centuries the Councils were absorbed in combating the old natural-istic superstitions; but in the end the pureminded saw themselves overwhelmed. St. Gregory the Great makes the best of it, and advises the missionaries not to suppress the rites and holy places of the Anglo-Saxons, but only to reconsecrate them to the new faith.

In this way was engendered a curious phonomenon; the rank vegetation of pagan fables and beliefs which primitive Christianity supposed itself summoned to extirpate was, to a large extent, preserved. Far from succeeding like Islam in suppressing "the times of ignorance." that is to say, pre-Islamic recollections, Christianity left almost all such anterior reminiscences alive, only disguising them beneath a thin Christian varnish. Gregory of Tours is quite as superstitious as any heathen. The world, in the sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth, and tenth centuries, is more crudely pagan than it ever was. Up to the great progress made in our own day by elementary education French peasants had not deserted a single one of their little Gaulish gods. The worship of the saints was the cloak under which polytheism was recatablished. This invasion of the idola-ter's spirit has sadly discredited modern Catholicism. The follies of Lourdes and La Salette, the multiplication of miracle-working images, the Sacred Heart, vows and pilgrimages, render contemporary Catholicism, in certain countries at least, a religion quite as materialistic as many a Syrian cult warred against John Chrysostom or suppressed by the edicts of the Emperors. The Church, in fact, maintained two attitudes with reference to pagan forms of worship; sometimes it was a duel to the death, like that which took place in Aphaca and in Phoenicia; sometimes there was a compromise, the old religion accepting, with more or less ductility, a tineture of Christianity. Every pagan that embraces Christianity in the second or third century holds his old religion in abhorrence; he who baptizes him requires him to detest his former gods. This is far from being the case with the Gaulish peasant or with the Frank or Anglo-Saxon warrior. His old religion is of so small account that it seems hardly worth the trouble involved in hating or seriously fighting it,

The deference evinced by Christianity for the old forms of worship from the time that it became itself the religion of the multitude, it also exhibited to many Greek prejudices. It seemed to be ashamed of its Jewish origin, and did its best to hide it. We have seen the Gnostics and the author of the Epistle to Diognotes affecting to believe that Christianity arose spontaneously, without any relationship to Judaism. Origen and Eusebius do not venture to say so, for they know the facts too well; but St. John Chrysostom, and in general those fathers that had received a peculiarly Hellenic education, know little about the real origin of Christianity, and have no wish to know more. They reject the whole Judgo-Christian and millenarian literature; the orthodox Greek Church puts such works under the ban; books of this kind have come down to us only when they were translated into Latin or the Oriental tongues. The Apocalypse of John escapes only because its roots are coiled about the very heart of the canon. Ventures in the direction of a unitaan Christianity, void of metaphysics and mythology, of a Christianity hardly distinguishable from a rationalistic Judaism, like the experiment of Zenobia and Paul of Samosata, have the ground cut from under them. These attempts would have produced an extremely simple Christianity, a mere continuation of Judaism, something analogous to what Islam was to be. Had they succeeded, they would no doubt have forestalled the success of Mohammed the Arabs and the Syrians. How much fanaticism might have been thus averted! Christiani ty is an edition of Judajsm adapted to the Indo-European taste : Mohammedanism is an edition of Judaism adapted to the Arab taste. Mohammed did nothing, after all, but revert to the Judgeo-Christianity of Zenobia, by a reaction against the metaphysical polytheism of the

Council of Nices and the Councils that followed. A more and more sharply accented separation between the clergy and the people was as other result of the wholesale conversions that took place in the fourth and fifth centuries. Those ignorant crowds were only fit to listen. The Church very quickly reached a point where it consisted of nothing but a clergy. Far from helping to elevate the intellectual average of Christianity, this transformation rather lowered it. Experience proves that little Churches that have no clergy are more liberal than the larger bodies. In England the Quakers and Methodists have done more for acclesiastical liberalism than the Established Church. Contrariwise to what happened in the second century wherein we see the wise and adnirable authority of Bishops and Presbyters checking follies and excess, what will hence forward dictate the action of the ciergy will be the demands and cravings of its mean-est section. Councils will bow before the gusts of monastic prejudices. swayed by the pettiest fanaticisms. In all the councils it is the most supersti tious dogma that wins the day. Aryanism. which had the remarkable merit.of converting the Germans before their lodgment within the empire, and which might have given to the world a Christianity susceptible of becoming rationalistic, was stifled by the grossness of a clergy that would insist on the absurd. In the middle ages this clergy becomes a foudal organism. The democratic book par excellence, the Gospel, is confiscated by those who profess to interpret it, and its bold utterances are discreetly deadened.

It has been then the fate of Christianity to almost founder in its hour of victory, like a ship which should come near sinking by reason of the too ponderous cargo heaped on board. Never had the founder of a religion followers so unlike himself as Jesus. Jesus is much rather a great Jew than a great man; his disci-ples have made of him the most complete antithesis to the Jew. namely, a man-God. The superpositions laid on his work by superstition. metaphysics, and policy have wholly masked the great prophet, so much so that all reforming of Christianity seems to consist in peeling off the incrustations left on it by our pagan ancestors, in order to reach the real Jesus But the gravest blunder that can be committed in religious history is to suppose to believe that religions are mighty in themselves, pos-soss absolute values. Religions are mighty by

casen of the perples that adopt them. Islamism has been useful or deleterious according to the races that have accepted it. Among the ed nations of the East, Christianity is a religion of very moderate ment, inspiring little virtue. It is among the people of the West, the Celtic, Germanic, and Latin races, that Christianity has been truly fecund. In the beginning a wholly Jewish product,

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Christianity has come in this way, in the process of time, to shed almost every trace of its ethnic origin, so that the contention of those who proclaim it the Aryan religion par excellence is, from many points of view, well founded. For centuries we have been infusing into it our Aryan ways of feeling, all our as-pirations, all our good qualities, and all our faults. Nothing is more false than the exegosis which would find Christianity graven between the lines of the Old Testament. Christianity has signified a rupture with Judaism, the abrogation of the Thora. Saint Bernard. Francis D'Assisi, Saint Elizabeth. Saint Theresa. Francis de Sales, Vincent de Paul, Fénélon, Channing, have about them nothing of the Jew. They are people of our own race, feeling with our bowels, thinking with our brain. Christianity gave them the traditional theme on which their posm is embroidered, but their genius is their own. Each race, in adopting the moral trainings of the past, gives them a new mould, makes them its own. The Bible has in this way borns fruits not its own; Judaism was only the wild slip on which the Aryan race has grafted its flower. In England and in Scotland the Bible has become the people's book of that Aryan folk which is most unlike the He-brews. Here we see, in brief, how Christianity, which was so notoriously Jewish by origin, managed to become the national religion of the European races, which, in roturn, sacrificed their ancient mythologies.

The renouncement of our old ethnical tra-

renunciation which wont little beneath the

surface, was yet estensibly so absolute that

nearly fifteen centuries had to pass before the

fact could again be called in question. The

has taken place in the nineteenth century, the species of resuscitation of dead races that we have witnessed, could not fail to recall the memory of our collective abdication be-fore the sons of Shem, and to provoke a certain reaction in this regard. Although no man, assuredly outside the closets of comparative mythologists, could think of summoning back to life the Germanic, Polasgic, Celtic, and Slavic mythologies. It would have been all the better for Christianity had these dangerous reminiscences been utterly extinguished, as actually happened in those countries where Islam was established. Races that lay claim to nobleness and originality in all things have shown themselves aggriced at being, even in religion, vassals of a despised family. impetuous Germans have not concealed their irritation; some Celtomaniaes have betrayed the same sentiment. The Greeks, owing their regained importance in the world to the fond memories of the ancient Hellenism, are at no pains to disguise their conviction that, in their case, Christianity was an apostasy. Greeks, Germans, Colts find solace in the thought that, if they have accepted Christianity, they have, at all events, transformed it, and made it a national affair. It is none the less true that the modern principle of race has been hurtful to Christianity. The religious action of Judaism on the world appeared too colossal. Men have perceived the faults of Israel, as well as its greatness; they have felt a twinge of shame at having let themselves be made Jews. just as extravagant German patriots have felt themselves obliged to treat the France of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries with peculiar harshness because they owe it so much. Another cause has widely undermined in our day the religion which our ancestors professed with entire contentment. The rejection of the supernatural has become an absolute dogma for every cultivated mind. The history of the physical world and of the world now appears to us a process of development whose causes are internal, not external, and which therefore exelude miracles—that is to say, the intervention of deliberate individual volitions. Now, from the Christian point of view, the world's history is only a series of miracles. The creation, the story of the Jewish people, the rôle of Jesus, even when these have been passed through the retort of the most liberal exegesis, leave a residuum of the supernatural that no operation of rationalistic chemics can extinguish or transform. The Semitic monotheistic religions are at bottom enemies of physical science. which to them seems a belittling and aimost a denying of God. God did everything and still does everything; that is their key to the universe. Christianity, though it has by no means carried this dogma to the same exaggerations as has Islam, postulates revelation, that is to

succumb. From the thirteenth century, the moment when, by reason of the study of the books of Aristotle and Averroes, the scientific spirit begins to wake up in Latin countries, until the sixteenth century, the Church, having the strength of the State at its disposal, managed to crush its foe; but in the seventeenth century scientific discoveries are too reverberative to be hushed up. The Church is still strong enough to seriously trouble the life of Galileo. to disturb Descartes, but not to hinder these discoveries from imposing laws on the intellect. In the eighteenth century reason triumphs; about the year 1800 scarcely any educated man believes any longer in the supernatural. The reactions that have followed have only been unimportant stops. If a good many timid minds, out of dread of great social questions, forbid themselves to be logi-

say a miracle, or one of those alleged facts that

Christianity and science, therefore, warfare is

inevitable; one of the two adversaries must

cience has never seen established. Between

iollowed have only been unimportant stops. If a good many timid minds, out of dread of great social questions, forbid themsolves to be logical, the mass of the population alike in city and in country, is straying further and further away from Christianity, and supernaturalism is losing some of its adherents daily.

What has Christianity done to place itself on guard against this formidable assault, which will overthrow it unless it retires from certain hopeless positions? Assuredly the Reformation of the sixteenth century was an act of supernatural and an action of the sixteenth century was an act of supernation of the sixteenth century was an act of supernation of the sixteenth century was an act of supernation of the sixteenth century was an act of supernatural sim; it reverted, in one sense, to primitive Christianity, and reduced to a trifle the idolatrous and pagan element in the cult. But the principle of the miracle, especially so far as the inspiration of the canonical books was concerned, was held fast. The reformation, moreover, has not been able to reach the whole of Christendom: it has been outstripped by rationalism, which will probably suppress the subject of reform before the reforming has been done. Protestantism can only save Christianity by attaining to complete rationalism, and by effecting a junction with all free minds whose programme may be thus summed up:

Great and splendid is the world, and, notwithstanding all the obscurity that enfoids it, we see that it is the outcome of an inward tendency toward right, of a supreme goodness. Christianity is the most striking of those efforts that are strung through history -efforts to give birth to an ideal of light and instice. Although the gorn of it was Jewish Christianity in give birth to an ideal of light and instice. Although the gorn of it was Jewish Christianity in a solid that the present in than in any other religious and moral plane cannot yet be rached by a whole people, and much less by mankind.

Let us then preserve Oristianity in a spi

Missions of the Methodist Church in Various

Of all the missionary work done by the various denominations, whether in this country or abroad, none is better organized or managed than that of the Methodist Episcopal managed than that of the Methodist Episcopal.
Church. The work is in charge of a Missionary Board, which consists of thirty-two minist
ters and thirty-two laymen; but there is a
power superior to this Board, namely. The
General Missionary Committee, which decides
what missions shall be carried on, and how much money may be spent on them. This committee meets once a year. It has just held its annual meeting at the mission rooms in this city. It is composed of the Bishops of the Church, the two missionary secretaries, and twenty-four members from the conferences. The vast interests intrusted to this committee make its annual meeting one of the most important affairs in the Church year. The sums which the committee resolves to appropriate to each mission are matters of intense inter-

SPREADING THE GOSPEL

country. From the days of Wesley the prevailing spirit of Methodism has been a missionary spirit. Yet until the year 1819 there was no organized missionary society of the Church in this country. At first, and for thirteen years, the work of the secrety was done almost entirely in this country. The amount of the contri-

est to nearly all of the Methodists in the

ditions in presence of Christian holiness, a great awakening of the rationalistic spirit which

butions for the first year was but \$32. In 1835 mission work was begun in Liberia. By this time the contributions for the year amounted to \$17,000. Since them bere amounted to the contribution of the other denominations divide their more work from the foreign work, keeping us separate organizations for the management of each, and taking collections on different days for each. This brings the two into competition, to a certain extent, and gives the individual donor the choice of bestowing his benefice according to bis preference. In the Methodist system both home and foreign missions are under one management, and the individual donor the choice of bestowing his benefice according to bith. The largest expenditure is in behalf of the foreign work.

At the meeting of the General Missionary Committee, each mission is axamined in regular order. If a mission has been conducted in such a way as to show that it is worth all it has cost, and to give promise of large future increase and success, the committee generally appropriates all that is asked for. For instance, the African Mission, which was established in Liberia, and which is the oldest foreign mission. receives foreign missions and success to the control of the least promising of all the missions in China make greater demands on the Methodist purse. The Mathodist Church has more missionaries in China from the precipital of the foreign mission. The Methodist have three missions on the Methodist purse. The Mothodist Church has more missionaries in China from the precipital of the process of the foreign mission in the mission of all the missions on the Methodist have three principal missionary has a sufficiently wild field of labor to remove all anxiety as to even the process of the store of the surface of the process of the surface of the surface of the process of the surface of the process of the surface of the proces

The Rev. Dr. Reid, one of the missionary secre-taries, also visited this mission and other im-portant ones, and brought back much cheering information.

Among the most promising of mission enter-prises abroad is South America. There are three principal centres of work—Montovideo, Buenos Ayres, and Rosario—the latter place being about 200 miles inland, while the others are on the seacoast. The work was begun at Buenos Ayres about 1835, in a small way, among the English-speaking residents. This was attended with such good results that in 1867 the services of several Spanish heliers were secured to carry the Gospel in the Span-ish language. Three churches and about a dozen other preaching places are occupied by this mission work. The appropriation to pro-vide for it during the year is somewhat over \$25,000.

secured to carry the Gospel in the Spanish and about a day of the bandung. Three churches and about a day of the mission of the property of the mission of the provide for it during the year is somewhat over yelde for it during the year is somewhat over yelde for it during the year is somewhat over yelde for it during the year is somewhat over yelde for it during the year is somewhat over yelde for it during the year is somewhat over yelde for it during the year is somewhat over yelde for it during the year is somewhat over yelde for it during the year of the mission in the yelde for the same and it is during the yelde for yelde for it is during the yelde for yeld